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The New Testament in Question

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In the Name of God
The Merciful, The Compassionate

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Introduction[1]

People have argued, have killed each other, have waged wars throughout the course of the last two thousand years over the way in which particular passages of the New Testament should be understood. In the past, when Church Fathers or other individuals were confronted with one of the various biblical ambiguities and contradictions, they speculated about its meaning. They attempted to interpret it. Once accepted, the conclusion of their speculation - that is, their interpretation - would become enshrined as dogma. Over the centuries, it then came to be regarded as established fact. Such conclusions are not fact at all. On the contrary, they are speculation and interpretation made into a tradition; and it is this tradition which is constantly mistaken for fact.

We basically know what views are held by the major branches of Christianity, but how did they arrive at those doctrines? To completely understand Christianity and the Jesus of history, it is essential to examine all possible aspects. It is important not only to know what is taught by the Church, but also what is ignored, and to know why it is ignored. The Gospels give us an idea of who Jesus was, but the Gospels are documents of a stark, mythic simplicity. They describe a world stripped to certain bare essentials, a world of a timeless, almost fairy-tale character. The effect is like reading a biography of, say, Billy Graham which makes no mention of his friendships with presidents and other prominent individuals, no mention of Kennedy's assassination, no mention of the civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, the transformation of values during the 1960's, or Watergate and its aftermath.

Contrary to Christian tradition, Palestine, at the time of the Christian era, was not a fairy-tale kingdom. It was a real place, with real individuals, such as one might find anywhere else in the world at any other time in history. Herod was not a king of obscure legend. He was a very powerful

ruler, whose reign (37 to 4 B.C.) extends beyond its biblical context to overlap those of well known secular figures - of Julius Caesar, for instance, Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Augustus and other personages familiar to us from school books and even from Shakespeare. Palestine in the first century, like any other place in the world, was subject to a complex array of social, psychological, political, economic, cultural, and religious factors. Numerous factions quarreled with each other and among themselves. Various parties had conflicting goals but often made temporary alliances with each other for the sole purpose of expediency. Deals were secretly arranged. The people, like people anywhere else at any other time, veered between apathetic torpor and hysterical fanaticism, between abject fear and fervent conviction. Little, if any, of this is conveyed by the Gospels - only a residue of confusion. And yet these currents, these forces, are essential for any understanding of the historical Jesus - the Jesus who actually walked the soil of Palestine two thousand years ago - rather than the Christ of faith. It is this Jesus that we endeavor to understand more clearly. To make such an endeavor is not to declare oneself anti-Christian.

A study of early church history and alternative interpretations of the New Testament puts the role of Jesus in a different light. If the Jesus of history is different than the Christ of faith, then many new questions come to mind: What was his real purpose? What about the virgin birth? What about the miracles he preformed? The latter part of this book answers these questions from an Islamic perspective. Many people have heard something about Islam, but to state definitively what it is often proves difficult. It is believed by Muslims that the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran were all originally revealed by the same God. And it is on this basis, the belief in one God, and a shared history, that we hope to achieve a greater understanding of the three most famous religions of the world.

Chapter 1

The Early Books Written about Jesus

Contrary to what most Christians assume, there were many other gospels and epistles written about the sayings and teachings of Jesus that never became part of the New Testament. These other gospels and epistles are known from the writings of historians, early church fathers, and from the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Because there was an abundant amount of literature that was written about the life of Jesus, there were many disagreements among early Church authorities about which books should be considered canonical. The books of the New Testament, as we know them today, were not finally agreed upon until the Councils of Hippo Regius in 393 and Carthage in 397.[1]

The Other Books

There were other books that were at one time considered canonical, but they are not included in what became the New Testament of today. One of the earliest copies of the New Testament, called the *Codex Sinaiticus*, now housed in the British Museum and dated about A.D. 350, includes the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Another early copy of the New Testament, called the *Codex Alexandria* includes the writings known as the *First and Second Epistles of Clement*. It was written in the fifth century and is also in the possession of the British Museum.

In 1945 there was a discovery of 52 texts of early Christian writings in Upper Egypt near the town of Nag Hammadi. These texts are now referred to as the Nag Hammadi Texts. Some scholars date these texts at A.D. 350-400, while others date them as early as A.D. 120-150.[2] In 1966 they were

turned over to a team of scholars for translation and publication. In 1977, the whole body of the Nag Hammadi codices was published in English.

The original discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls occurred in 1947 in a cave in the valley of the Dead Sea in a locale known as Qumran. It is not known how many were originally found because those of the original find passed through many hands. Some were ignorantly burned and others were sold on the black market. Altogether, a total of seven complete scrolls found their way into the public domain, along with fragments of some twenty-one others.[3] Subsequent searches of near-by caves produced other material. One cave in particular yielded over 800 scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls contained material pertaining to both the Old Testament and early Christianity.

To the great dismay of many scholars, historians, and enquiring minds, the translation procedure of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been extremely slow compared to that of the Nag Hammadi Texts. Now, more than forty years after the discovery of the scrolls, the bulk of the material has yet to be published. Only a tightly controlled group of researchers has been allowed access to the scrolls. All ensuing requests of scholars to study the scrolls have been denied. This tightly controlled group of scholars is under the direction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which is ultimately controlled by the Vatican.[4] They work through the institute called the Ecole Biblique which is located in Jerusalem and run by Dominican monks.[5]

The Pontifical Biblical Commission continues to supervise and monitor all biblical studies conducted under the auspices of the Catholic Church. It also publishes official decrees on "The right way to teach ... scripture".[6] In 1907, adherence to these decrees was made obligatory by Pope Pius X. Thus, for example, on April 21, 1964, the Commission issued a decree governing biblical scholarship in general and, more specifically, the "Historical truth of the Gospels". The Decree was quite unequivocal, stating that "At all times the interpreter must cherish a spirit of ready obedience to the Church's teaching authority."[7] Any scholar working under the Commission's aegis - and this, of course, includes those at the Ecole Biblique - is thus in effect constrained by the Commission's decrees. Whatever conclusions he might reach, whatever

the revelations to which his research might lead him, he must not, in his writing or his teaching, contradict the Commission's doctrinal authority.[8]

The following are some of the titles of the scrolls found at either Nag Hammadi or the Dead Sea, or which are listed in the writings of early historians. It must be noted that these are only a few of many:

- The Wisdom of Jesus Christ
- The Gospel of Thomas
- The Second Apcalypse of James
- The Gospel of the Nazoreans
- The Gospel of the Egyptians
- The Gospel of Phillip
- The Apocryphon (secret book) of John
- The Gospel of Truth
- The Secret Book of James
- The Apocalypse of Paul
- The Letter of Peter to Phillip
- The Apocalypse of Peter
- The Testimony of Truth
- The Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)
- The Dialogue of the Savior
- Treatise on Resurrection
- The Habakkuk Commentary
- The War Scroll
- The Damascus Document
- The Temple Scroll
- The Book of Thomas the Contender
- On the Origin of the World

Prior to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls, we did not know about many of the other early Christian writings because earlier writings were ordered to be destroyed. During the reign of the Christian Emperor Flavius Theodosius (A.D. 379-395), all writings that were not in conformity with the doctrines of Roman Christianity were burned, with the approval of the Emperor and the Church. Again, during the reign of the Christian Emperor Valentinian III (A.D. 425-454), the

emperor issued an order to burn all writing opposed to the Roman version of Christianity.[9]

The New Testament Documents

The gospels were not documents written by the apostles of Jesus Christ nor were they considered inspired by the Holy Spirit when they were written. In the middle of the Second century, Saint Justin referred to the Gospels as the "Memoirs of the Apostles." In the introduction of Luke, the author states that his intention is to "compile" a record as others have and says he received his information from eyewitnesses - implying that he was not an eyewitness. The introduction to his chapter reads as follows:

> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning to write it out for you in consecutive order.[10]

Modern scholars are unanimous in concurring that the Gospels do not date from Jesus' lifetime. For the most part they date from the period between the two major revolts in Judaea - 66 to 74 and 132 to 135 - although they are almost certainly based on earlier accounts. These earlier accounts may have included written documents since lost - for there was a wholesale destruction of records in the wake of the first rebellion. But there would certainly have been oral tradition as well. Some of these were undoubtedly grossly exaggerated and/or distorted, received and transmitted at second, third or fourth hand. Others, however, may have been derived from individuals who were alive in Jesus' lifetime and may even have known him personally. A young man at the time of the Crucifixion might well have been alive when the Gospels were composed.

The earliest of the Gospels is generally considered to be Mark's, composed sometime during the revolt of 66-74 or shortly thereafter - except for its treatment of the Resurrection, which is a later and spurious addition. Although not one of Jesus' original disciples, Mark seems to

have come from Jerusalem. He seems to have been a companion of Saint Paul, and his Gospel bears an unmistakable stamp of Pauline thought. But if Mark was a native of Jerusalem, his Gospel - as Clement of Alexandria states - was composed in Rome and addressed to a Greco-Roman audience. This in itself explains a great deal. At the time that Mark's Gospel was composed, Judaea was, or had recently been, in open revolt, and thousands of Jews were being crucified for rebellion against the Roman Regime. If Mark wished his Gospel to survive and impress itself on a Roman audience, he could not possibly present Jesus as anti-Roman. In order to ensure the survival of his message he would have been obliged to exonerate the Romans of all guilt for Jesus' death - to whitewash the existing and entrenched regime and blame the death of the Messiah on certain Jews. This device was adopted, not only by the authors of the other Gospels, but by the early Christian Church as well. Without such a device neither Gospels nor Church would have survived.

The Gospel of Luke is dated by scholars at around A.D. 80. Luke himself appears to have been a Greek doctor who composed his work for a high-ranking Roman official at Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine. For Luke, too, therefore, it would have been necessary to placate and appease the Romans and transfer the blame elsewhere.

By the time the Gospel of Matthew was composed - approximately A.D. 85 - such a transference seems to have been accepted as an established fact and gone unquestioned. More than half of Matthew's Gospel, in fact, is derived directly from Mark's, although it was composed originally in Greek and reflects specifically Greek characteristics. The author seems to have been a Jew, quite possibly a refugee from Palestine. He is not to be confused with the disciple named Matthew, who would have lived much earlier and would probably have known only Aramaic.

It requires no very detailed study to discover that these three Gospels have a considerable amount of material in common. We find, for example, that the substance of 606 out of the 661 verses of Mark appears in Matthew, and that some 380 of Mark's verses reappear with little material change in Luke. Or, to put it another way, out of the 1,068 verses of Matthew, about 500 contain material also found in Mark; of the 1,149 verses of Luke, about 380 are paralleled in Mark. Altogether, there are

only 31 verses in Mark which have no parallel either in Matthew or Luke.[11]

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known collectively as the Synoptic Gospels, implying that they see "eye to eye" or "with one eye" - which, of course, they do not. Nevertheless, there is enough overlap between them to suggest that they are derived from a single common source - either an oral tradition or some other document subsequently lost. This distinguishes them from the Gospel of John, which betrays significantly different origins.

Nothing whatever is known about the author of the Fourth Gospel. Indeed there is no reason to assume his name was John. Except for John the Baptist, the name John is mentioned at no point in the Gospel itself, and its attribution to a man called John is generally accepted as later tradition. The fourth Gospel is the latest of those in the New Testament - composed around A.D. 100 in the vicinity of the Greek city of Ephesus.[12]

Although names are attributed to the Gospels and epistles, it is not known whether or not these were the real writers. The practice of forging documents and falsely attributing them to other authors, such as the apostles, is well attested to in the early Gentile Church. In the latter half of the second century Dionysius, the Bishop of Cornith, wrote:

> As the brethren desired me to write epistles, I did so, and these the apostles of the devil have filled with tares (undesirable elements), exchanging some things and adding others, for whom there is a woe reserved. It is not, therefore, a matter of wonder if some have also attempted to adulterate the sacred writings of the Lord, since they have attempted the same in other works that are not to be compared with these.[13]

Why is the New Testament considered the word of God? The Open Bible, which is a study Bible that uses the 1959 New American Standard Bible translation, refers to 2 Timothy 3:16 for the answer which says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." The New Testament as we know it today was not finalized until the ecclesiastical councils classified

the canonical books in North Africa at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397. Many of the New Testament documents were considered canonical before this time; nevertheless, doubt remained. The only books of which there was any substantial doubt after the middle of the second century were some of those which come at the end of the New Testament. Origen (185-254), a biblical scholar, mentions the four Gospels, the Acts, the thirteen Paulines, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation as acknowledged by all; he says that Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, James and Jude, with the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*, and the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, were disputed by some. Origen had the following to say about the *Epistle to the Hebrews*:

> If I were asked my personal opinion, I would say that the (subject) matter is the Apostle's (Paul) but the phraseology and construction are those of someone who remembered the Apostle's teaching and wrote his own interpretation of what his master said.[14]

The Bishop Eusebius (c.260-339) of Caesarea mentions which books were in question:

> Those that are disputed, yet familiar to most, include the epistles known as James, Jude, and 2 Peter, and those called 2 and 3 John, the work either of the evangelist or of someone else with the same name.
>
> Among Spurious Books must be placed the 'Acts' of Paul, the 'Shepherd', and the 'Revelation of Peter'; also the alleged 'Epistle of Barnabas', and the 'Teachings of the Apostles', together with the Revelation of John, if this seems the right place for it: as I said before, some reject it, others include it among the Recognized Books. [15]

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (247-c.264) relays what others thought about the Revelation of John before it was ever part of the New Testament canon:[16]

> Some of our predecessors rejected the book and pulled it entirely to pieces, criticizing it chapter by chapter, pronouncing it

> unintelligible and illogical and the title false. They say it is not John's and is not a revelation at all, since it is heavily veiled by its thick curtain of incomprehensibility: so far from being one of the apostles, the author of the book was not even one of the saints, or a member of the Church, but Cerinthus, the founder of the sect called Cerinthian after him, who wished to attach a name commanding respect to his own creation. This, they say, was the doctrine he taught - that Christ's kingdom would be on earth; and the things he lusted after himself, being the slave of his body and sensual through and through, filled the heaven of his dreams - unlimited indulgence in gluttony and lechery at banquets, drinking-bouts, and wedding feasts of (to call these things by what he thought more respectable names) festivals, sacrifices, and the immolation of victims.

Why did it take so long to consider these books authentic? To get some perspective of time, remember that it has been just over 200 years since the United States declared its independence from England. But it wasn't until almost 400 years after the ascent of Christ that the New Testament canon was finalized. This was at a time when they had only poor material to write on and everything had to be copied laboriously by hand. Since the decision that bound the New Testament documents into one final volume occurred 400 years after the ascent of Christ, then what scriptures were being referred to in 2 Timothy 3:16? Was the author also referring to the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*, and the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* or to some of the documents found at Nag Hammadi and/or the Dead Sea? How could the then unknown works of the New Testament written after 2 Timothy be accepted as scripture? Because of these questions, it is most likely that the scripture referred to are those of the Old Testament. If in 2 Timothy 3:16 the author is referring to Old Testament scripture, the question is left unanswered as to what makes the New Testament scripture considered inspired or authoritative.

The Epistles of Paul and his description of Christ were not always widely accepted. In his history of the church, Eusebius describes two sects which were both called Ebonites. He states the following about one of these sects:

They (Ebonites) did not deny that the Lord was born of a virgin and the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless shared their refusal to acknowledge His pre-existence as God the Word and Wisdom.... . They held that the epistles of the Apostle (Paul) ought to be rejected altogether, calling him a renegade from the Law; and using only the 'Gospel of the Hebrews', they treated the rest with scant respect. Like the others, they observed the Sabbath and the whole Jewish system.[17]

Some of the "modern" Bibles document mistakes made in earlier translations of the Bible. The preface of the 1971 Revised Standard Version states that the 1611 King James Version Bible had "grave defects". These defects were discovered when earlier versions of the New Testament were found than those which the King James version was based on. They state "that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation." In the New American Standard Bible, there are over 127 footnotes that state corrections made from earlier manuscripts of the New Testament. For example, it is noted that "some of the oldest" manuscripts do not contain the last eleven verses of the sixteenth chapter of Mark, and verses 7:53-8:11 of John. It also says that many manuscripts do not contain Acts 8:37 which reads:

"And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may (be baptized)." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

In Mark 1:1 it says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The footnote explains that many manuscripts do not contain the phrase, "the Son of God." In Revelation 13:18 we learn that the sign of the beast is 666, but a footnote states that some manuscripts read 616. Some of the 127 dubious verses just mentioned in the New American Standard Bible are significant; they are verses used to argue that Jesus is the son of God. If older versions of the New Testament do not contain verses that later versions of the New Testament do, one can only conclude they were added at a later time. Were these the only additions made to the New Testament? Perhaps new discoveries of old manuscripts or the translation of some of the scrolls found at the Dead Sea will yet reveal additional changes.

What makes the books of the New Testament the word of God? Why do Christians believe the books in the New Testament are inspired scripture? Who were the real authors of the New Testament? Who gave authority to the men to choose these documents while leaving others out? Why, for example, was Hebrews accepted into the canon and the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* left out? How do we know that the original texts weren't adulterated? These questions cannot be answered authoritatively. Yet, the answers to these questions establish the foundation of Christian doctrine.

Chapter 2

Palestine at the Time of Jesus[1]

Palestine in the first century was a very troubled corner of the globe. For some time in the Holy Land there had been dynastic power struggles, internecine strife, and on occasion, full-scale war. During the second century B.C. a more or less unified Judaic kingdom was transiently established - as chronicled by the Old Testament books of Maccabees. By 63 B.C., however, the land was in upheaval again and ripe for conquest.

More than half a century before Jesus' birth Palestine fell to the armies of Pompey, and Roman rule was imposed. But Rome at the time was overextended and too preoccupied with her own affairs to install the administrative apparatus necessary for direct rule. She therefore created a line of puppet kings to rule under her aegis. This line was that of the Herodians - who were not Jewish but Arab. The first of the line was Antipater, who assumed the throne of Palestine in 63 B.C. One must visualize a conquered land and a conquered people, ruled by a puppet regime that was kept in power by military force. The people of the country were allowed to retain their own religion and customs. But the final authority was Rome. This authority was implemented according to Roman law and enforced by Roman soldiery - as it was in Britain not long after.

In A.D. 6, the situation became more critical. In this year the country was split administratively into one province and two tetrachies. Herod Antipas became ruler of one, Galilee. But Judaea - the spiritual and secular capital - was rendered subject to direct Roman rule, administered by a Roman procurator based at Caesarea. The Roman regime was brutal and autocratic. When it assumed direct control of Judaea, more than three

thousand rebels were summarily crucified. The temple was plundered and defiled. Heavy taxation was imposed. Torture was frequently employed, and many of the populace committed suicide. This state of affairs was not improved by Pontius Pilate, who presided as procurator of Judaea from A.D. 26 to 36. In contrast to the biblical portraits of him, existing records indicate that Pilate was a cruel and corrupt man who not only perpetuated but intensified the abuses of his predecessor. It is thus all the more surprising - at least at first glance - that there should be no criticism of Rome in the Gospels, no mention even of the burden of the Roman yoke. Indeed, the Gospel accounts suggest that the inhabitants of Judaea were placid and contented with their lot.

In point of fact very few were contented, and many were far from placid. The Jews in the Holy Land at the time could be loosely divided into several sects and subsects. There were, for example, the Sadducees - a small but wealthy land-owning class who, to the anger of their compatriots, collaborated, Quisling-fashion, with the Romans. There were the Pharisees - a progressive group who introduced much reform into Judaism and who, despite the portrait of them in the Gospels, placed themselves in staunch, albeit largely passive, opposition to Rome. There were the Essenes - an austere, mystically oriented sect, whose teachings were much more prevalent and influential than is generally acknowledged or supposed. It is worth citing the Nazorites, however, of whom Samson, centuries before, had been a member and who were still in existence during Jesus' time.

There were numerous other groups and sects as well. In A.D. 6, when Rome assumed direct control of Judaea, a Pharisee rabbi known as Judas of Galilee had created a highly militant revolutionary group composed, it would appear, of both Pharisees and Essenes. This following became known as Zealots. The Zealots were not, strictly speaking, a sect; they were a movement whose membership was drawn from a number of sects. By the time of Jesus' mission, the Zealots had assumed an increasingly prominent role in the Holy Land's affairs. Long after the Crucifixion Zealot activity continued unabated. By A.D. 44 this activity had so intensified that some sort of armed struggle already seemed inevitable. In A.D. 66 the struggle erupted, the whole of Judaea rising in organized revolt against Rome.

It was a desperate, tenacious, but ultimately futile conflict. At Caesarea alone 20,000 Jews were massacred by the Romans. Within four years Roman legions had occupied Jerusalem, razed the city, and sacked and plundered the temple.

The aftermath of the revolt in Judaea witnessed a massive exodus of Jews from the Holy Land. Nevertheless, enough remained to incite another rebellion some sixty years later in A.D. 132. At last, in 135, the Emperor Hadrian decreed that all Jews be expelled by law from Judaea, and Jerusalem became essentially a Roman city. It was renamed Aelia Capitolina.

Jesus' lifetime spanned roughly the first 35 years of a turmoil extending over 140 years. The turmoil did not cease with his ascent, but continued for another century. And it caused the psychological and cultural feelings that naturally occur in any such sustained defiance of an oppressor. One of these feelings was the hope and longing for a Messiah who would deliver his people from the tyrant's yoke. It was only by virtue of historical and semantic accident that this term came to be applied specifically and exclusively to Jesus.

For Jesus' contemporaries no Messiah would ever have been regarded as divine. Indeed, the very idea of a divine Messiah would have been preposterous, if not unthinkable. The Greek word for Messiah is Christ or Christos, The term - whether in Hebrew or Greek - meant simply "the anointed one" and generally referred to a king. Thus, David, when he was anointed king in the Old Testament, became, quite explicitly, a "Messiah" or a "Christ." And every subsequent Jewish king of the house of David was known by the same title. Even during the Roman occupation of Judaea, the Roman-appointed high Priest was known as the Priest Messiah or Priest Christ.[2]

For the Zealots, however, and for other opponents of Rome, this puppet priest was of necessity, a false Messiah. For them the true Messiah implied something very different - the "lost king," the unknown descendant of the house of David who would deliver his people from Roman tyranny.

The term "Messiah," then, implied nothing in any way divine. Strictly defined, it meant nothing more than an anointed king, and in the popular mind it came to mean an anointed king who would also be a liberator. In other words, it was a term with specifically political connotations - something quite different from the later Christian idea of a "Son of God." It was this mundane political term that was applied to Jesus. He was called "Jesus the Messiah" or - translated into Greek - "Jesus the Christ." Only later was this designation contracted to "Jesus Christ", a purely functional title distorted into a proper name.

Chapter 3

The Rightful King[1]

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke state explicitly that Jesus was of royal blood - a genuine and legitimate king, the lineal descendant of Solomon and David. If this is true, it would have conferred upon him at least one important qualification for being the Messiah, or for being presented as such. It is evident that certain people, from radically diverse backgrounds and with radically diverse interests, are quite prepared to acknowledge the validity of this claim. In Matthew 2:2, the three wise men came seeking "he who has been born King of the Jews." In Luke 23:2, Jesus is accused of "... misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He himself is Christ, a King." In Matthew 21:9, on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus is greeted by a multitude shouting "Hossanna to the son of David." There can be little question that, in this episode, Jesus is being hailed as king. Indeed, the Gospels of both Luke and John are explicit on the matter. In both of them, Jesus is hailed quite unequivocally as king. And in John 1:49, Jesus is told bluntly by Nathanael: "You are the King of Israel!"

Finally, of course, there is the inscription "King of the Jews", which Pilate orders affixed to the Cross. Apart from this the Gospels tell us virtually nothing. In John 6:15, there is a curious statement, that "Jesus, therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone." And in John 19:21-22: "the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews'; but that he said, "I am King of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." But there is no elaboration of these passages. We are given no real indication of

whether the title was warranted or not, official or not, recognized or not. Nor are we given any indication of how, precisely, Pilate intended the appellation to be understood. What was his motivation? What was his action intended to achieve?

At some point in the past, it was assumed, on the basis of speculative interpretation, that Pilate must have intended the title mockingly. To have assumed otherwise would have been to raise a number of awkward questions. Today, most Christians blindly accept, as if it were a matter of established fact, that Pilate used the title mockingly. But this is not established fact at all. If one reads the Gospels themselves, with no preconceptions whatever, there is nothing to suggest that the title was not used in all seriousness - was not perfectly legitimate and acknowledged as such by at least some of Jesus' contemporaries, including Pilate. So far as the Gospels themselves are concerned, Jesus may indeed have been King of the Jews. It is only tradition that persuaded people otherwise. To suggest that Jesus may actually have been King of the Jews is not, therefore, to stand at variance with the evidence. It is merely to stand at variance with a long established tradition - a long established system of beliefs. For in Matthew's account of Jesus' birth, the three "wise men" ask, "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?" If Pilate intended the title to be derisive, what is one to make of the question of the Magi? Did they, too, intend it as derisive? Surely not. Yet if they were referring to a legitimate title, why should not Pilate have been doing so as well?

The status of the expected Messiah was augmented by the circumstances which took place in Palestine at the period of Jesus' birth. This period was known, for those living in it, as "the Last Times," or "the Last Days." The nation was believed to have fallen into a phase of cataclysmic evil. The last dynasty of legitimate Judaic monarchies had been all but extinguished. Since 63 B.C., Israel herself had become a territory of the Roman Empire, forced to acknowledge a secular ruler who - in blasphemous affront to every tenet of Judaism - dared to proclaim himself a god. And the throne of the country was occupied by a puppet-king regarded as an iniquitous usurper. Herod, who reigned over Palestine at the time, could not even claim to be a Jew by birth. He was a native of Idumaea, the largely desert, and non-Judaic, region to the south.

At the beginning of his reign, Herod undertook to establish currency and legitimacy for himself. He repudiated his first wife and married a recognized Judaic princess, thereby seeking at least a form of legal sanction. In order to ingratiate himself with the populace, he rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem on a hitherto unprecedented scale. He proclaimed himself a devout servant of the God of Israel. Such gestures failed dismally to ratify his authority. He remained reviled and hated by the people he ruled. Even his most generous acts were received with hostility and scorn, and this encouraged a natural predisposition towards tyranny and excess.

That such a man should be placed in the role of ruler over God's chosen was deemed a curse - affliction visited by God upon His people, a punishment for transgression both past and present. Whatever social and political abuses Herod might perpetrate, these were seen merely as symptoms of a much more profound dilemma - the dilemma of a people who had been abandoned by their God. Throughout the Palestine of Jesus' time, there spread a yearning for a spiritual leader who would bring the nation back to God again, would effect a reconciliation with the divine. This spiritual leader, when he appeared, would be the rightful king - the "Messiah." As king, he would rescue his people. He would restore God's covenant with man. Aided by God, suffused by God, sanctioned and mandated by God, performing God's will, he would drive the Roman invaders from Palestine and establish his own righteous regime, as glorious as that ascribed by tradition to Solomon and David.

Christian tradition, of course, does not contest Jesus' claim to Messiahship. It contests only what Messiahship entailed, simply because this, for centuries, was not made sufficiently clear. To accept Jesus as a Messiah while denying his regal and political role is simply to ignore the facts - to ignore the historical context, to ignore what the word "Messiah" meant and implied. Christians have regarded the Messiah as non-political - a wholly spiritual figure who posed no challenge to temporal authority, who had no secular or political aspirations himself, who beckoned his followers to a kingdom "not of this world". Biblical scholarship during the last two centuries, however, has rendered such an interpretation increasingly untenable. Few, if any, experts on the subject today would contest that the Messiah expected in Jesus' era was a largely political

figure, intent on redeeming Israel from the Roman yoke. Judaism at the time acknowledged no distinction between religion and politics. There is further evidence for Jesus' royal status in the Gospel narrative of Herod's Massacre of the Innocents (Matthew 2:3-14). Though highly questionable as the record of an actual historical event, this narrative attests to a very real anxiety on Herod's part about the birth of Jesus:

> When Herod the king heard it, he was troubled ... And gathering together the chief priests and scribes, he began to enquire of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judaea, for so it has been written by the prophet..."[2]

However disliked Herod may have been, his position on the throne should in theory have been secure. Certainly, he could not have felt seriously menaced by rumors of a mystical or spiritual figure - a prophet or a teacher of the kind in which the Holy Land at the time abounded. If Herod felt threatened by a recently born child, it can only have been because of what the child intrinsically was - a rightful king, for example, with a claim to the throne which even Rome, in the interests of peace and stability, might recognize. Only a concrete, political challenge of this nature would suffice to explain Herod's anxiety. It is not the son of a poor carpenter who the usurper fears, but the Messiah, the rightful anointed king - a figure who, by virtue of some inherent genealogical qualification, might rally popular support and, if not depose him, at least compromise him on specifically political grounds.

The Privileged Background[3]

The image of Jesus as a "poor carpenter" from Nazareth can be challenged at length. For the present, however, it is sufficient simply to note two points. The first of these is that the word generally translated as "carpenter" does not, in the original Greek mean merely a woodworker. The most accurate translation would be "master", implying mastery of an art, craft or discipline. It would thus have been as applicable to a teacher, for example, as to a practitioner of any manual skill.[4] The second point is that Jesus was almost certainly not "of Nazareth". An overwhelming body of evidence indicates that Nazareth did not exist in biblical times. The

town is unlikely to have appeared before the third century. "Jesus of Nazareth", as most biblical scholars would now readily concur, is a mistranslation of the original Greek phrase "Jesus the Nazarene". This does not denote any locality. Rather, it refers to Jesus' membership in a specific group or sect with a specific religious and/or political orientation - the "Nazarene Party", as certain modern experts call it.

There is notoriously little accurate information about Jesus' circumstances. But what there is clearly indicates that his family was well-to-do, and that his upbringing was of a kind available only to those with status and financial resources. All accounts, for example, depict him as a learned man - which was, one must remember, unusual in those largely illiterate times, when education was essentially an adjunct of class. Jesus is obviously literate and well educated. In the Gospels, he disputes knowledgeably with his elders about the Law. From his own statements, it is clear that he is word-perfect in his familiarity with the prophetic books of the Old Testament, can quote them at will, can move among them with the facility and expertise of a professional scholar, and if some of his entourage are apparently humble fishermen and artisans from Galilee, others are wealthy and influential people - Joseph of Arimathea, for example, and Nicodemus, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward.

Public Recognition

Perhaps more significant than evidence of this kind is the simple fact that Jesus, on a number of crucial occasions in the Gospels, acts like a king, and does so quite deliberately. One of the most telling examples is his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Biblical scholars concur that this incident - manifestly an important one in Jesus' career and calculated to attract maximum attention among his contemporaries - served a very specific purpose. It was intended, to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. Indeed, in Matthew 21:4, it is made explicit that the procession was intended to fulfil the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, which foretells the coming of the Messiah:

> Say to the daughter of Zion,
> "Behold your King is coming to you,
> gentle and mounted on a donkey,..."

Given Jesus' familiarity with Old Testament teaching, there can be little question that he was aware of this prophecy. And being aware of this prophecy, he can hardly have fulfilled it unwittingly, or through "sheer coincidence". The entry into Jerusalem could only have been made with the calculated design of identifying himself, very specifically in the eyes of the populace, with the expected Messiah - in other words, with the rightful king, the "anointed one".

Chapter 4

The Secret the Church Forbade[1]

Christianity, from the beginning, was oriented primarily toward a Roman or Romanized audience. The Roman world was accustomed to deifying its rulers, and Caesar had already been officially instated as a god. In order to compete, Jesus - whom nobody had previously deemed divine - had to be deified as well. In Paul's hands he was.

Before it could be successfully disseminated - from Palestine to Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, Rome, and western Europe - the new religion had to be made acceptable to the people of those regions. And it had to be capable of holding its own against already established creeds. If Jesus was to gain a foothold in the Romanized world of his time, he had enescapably to become a full-fledged god. Not a Messiah in the old sense of that term, not a priest-king, but God incarnate - who, like his Syrian, Phoenician, Egyptian, and classical counterparts, passed through the underworld and the harrowing of Hell and emerged, rejuvenated, with the spring. It was at this point that the idea of the Resurrection first assumed such crucial importance, and for a fairly obvious reason - to place Jesus on a par with Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and all the other dying and reviving gods who populated both the world and the consciousness of their time.

By pandering to a Roman audience and deifying Jesus, the spread of what subsequently became Christian orthodoxy was assured of success. The position of this orthodoxy began to consolidate itself definitively in the second century, principally through Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons around A.D. 180. Probably more than any other early Church Father, Irenaeus contrived to impart to Christian theology a stable and coherent form. He

accomplished this primarily by means of a voluminous work, Libros Quinque Adversus Haereses (Five Books against Heresies). In his exhaustive work Irenaeus catalogued all deviations from the coalescing orthodoxy and vehemently condemned them. Deploring diversity, he maintained there could be only one valid Church, outside which there could be no salvation. Whoever challenged this assertion, Irenaeus declared to be a heretic - to be expelled and, if possible, destroyed.

Among the numerous diverse forms of early Christianity, it was Gnosticism, (which comes from the Greek word gnosis, usually translated as "knowledge") that incurred Irenaeus' most contemptuous wrath. Gnosticism rested on personal experience, personal union with the divine. For Irenaeus this naturally undermined the authority of priests and bishops and so hindered the attempt to impose uniformity. As a result he devoted his energies to suppressing Gnosticism. To this end it was necessary to discourage individual speculation and to encourage unquestioning faith in fixed dogma. A theological system was required, a structure of codified tenets that allowed of no interpretation by the individual. In opposition to personal experience and gnosis, Irenaeus insisted on a single "catholic" (that is, universal) Church resting on apostolic foundation and succession. And to implement the creation of such a Church, Irenaeus recognized the need for a definitive canon - a fixed list of authoritative writings. Accordingly he compiled such a canon, sifting through the available works, including some, excluding others. Irenaeus is the first writer whose New Testament canon conforms essentially to that of the present day.

Such measures, of course, did not prevent the spread of early heresies. On the contrary, they continued to flourish. But with the orthodoxy Irenaeus promoted, it assumed a coherent form that ensured its survival and eventual triumph. It is not unreasonable to claim that Irenaeus paved the way for what occurred during and immediately after the reign of Constantine - under whose auspices the Roman empire became, in some senses, a Christian empire.

The role of Constantine in the history and development of Christianity has been falsified, misrepresented, and misunderstood. According to later Church tradition Constantine had inherited from his father a sympathetic

predisposition toward Christianity. In fact, this predisposition seems to have been primarily a matter of expediency, for Christians by then were numerous and Constantine needed all the help he could get against Maxentius, his rival for the imperial throne. In A.D. 312 Maxentius was routed at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, thus leaving Constantine's claim unchallenged. Immediately before this crucial engagement Constantine is said to have had a vision - later reinforced by a prophetic dream - of a luminous cross hanging in the sky. A sentence was supposedly inscribed across it - "In Hoc Signo Vinces" ("By this sign you will conquer"). Tradition recounts that Constantine, yielding to this celestial sign, ordered the shields of his troops hastily emblazoned with the Christian monogram - the Greek letters Chi Rho, the first two letters of the word "Christos". As a result, Constantine's victory over Maxentius at Milvian Bridge came to represent a miraculous triumph of Christianity over paganism.

This, then, is the popular Church tradition on the basis of which Constantine is often thought to have "converted the Roman empire to Christianity." In actual fact, however, Constantine did no such thing. But in order to decide precisely what he did do, we must examine the evidence more closely.

In the first place Constantine's "conversion" - if that is the appropriate word - does not seem to have been Christian at all but blatantly pagan. He appears to have had some sort of vision, or experience, in the precincts of a pagan temple to the Gallic Apollo, either in the Vosges or near Autun. According to a witness accompanying Constantine's army at the time, the vision was of the sun god - the deity worshiped by certain cults under the name of "Sol Invictus," "the Invincible Sun." There is evidence that Constantine, just before his vision, had been initiated into a Sol Invictus cult. In any case the Roman Senate, after the Battle of Milvian Bridge, erected a triumphal arch in the Colosseum. According to the inscription on this arch Constantine's victory was won "through the prompting of the deity." But the deity in question was not Jesus. It was Sol Invictus, the pagan sun god.[2]

Contrary to tradition, Constantine did not make Christianity the official state religion of Rome. The state religion of Rome under Constantine was, in fact, pagan sun worship; and Constantine, all his life,

acted as its chief priest. Indeed, his reign was called a "sun emperorship," and Sol Invictus figured everywhere - including on the imperial banners and the coinage of the realm. The image of Constantine as a fervent convert to Christianity is clearly wrong. He himself was not even baptized until 337 - when he lay on his deathbed and was apparently too weakened or too apathetic to protest. Nor can he be credited with the Chi Rho monogram. An inscription bearing this monogram was found on a tomb at Pompeii dating from two and a half centuries before.[3]

The cult of Sol Invictus was Syrian in origin and imposed by Roman emperors on their subjects a century before Constantine. Although it contained elements of Baal and Astarte worship, it was essentially monotheistic. In effect, it presupposed the sun god as the sum of all attributes of all other gods and thus peacefully subsumed its potential rivals. Moreover, it conveniently harmonized with the cult of Mithras - which was also prevalent in Rome and the empire at the time and which also involved solar worship.

For Constantine the cult of Sol Invictus was, quite simply, expedient. His primary, indeed obsessive, objective was unity - unity in politics, in religion, and in territory. A cult or state religion that included all other cults within it obviously helped to achieve this objective. And it was under the auspices of the Sol Invictus cult that Christianity consolidated its position.

Christian orthodoxy had much in common with the cult of Sol Invictus, and thus the former was able to flourish unmolested under the latter's umbrella of tolerance. The cult of Sol Invictus, being essentially monotheistic, paved the way for the monotheism of Christianity. And the cult of Sol Invictus was convenient in other respects as well - which both modified and facilitated the spread of Christianity. By a decree announced in A.D. 321, for example, Constantine ordered the law courts closed on "the venerable day of the sun" and decreed that this day be a day of rest. Christianity had hitherto held the Jewish Sabbath - Saturday - as sacred. Now, in accordance with Constantine's edict, it transferred its sacred day to Sunday. This not only brought it into harmony with the existing regime but also permitted it to further dissociate itself from its Judaic origins. Until the fourth century, moreover, Jesus' birthday had been celebrated on

January 6th. For the cult of Sol Invictus, however, the crucial day of the year was December 25 - the festival of Natalis Invictus, the birth (or rebirth) of the sun, when the days began to grow longer. In this respect, too, Christianity brought itself into alignment with the regime and the established state religion.

The cult of Sol Invictus meshed happily with that of Mithras - so much so, indeed, that the two are often confused.[4] Both emphasized the status of the sun. Both held Sunday as sacred. Both celebrated a major birth festival on December 25. As a result Christianity could also find points of convergence with Mithraism - the more so as Mithraism stressed the immortality of the soul, a future judgment, and the resurrection of the dead.

In the interests of unity Constantine deliberately chose to blur the distinctions among Christianity, Mithraism and Sol Invictus - deliberately chose not to see any contradictions among them. Thus, he tolerated the deified Jesus as the earthly manifestation of Sol Invictus. Thus he would build a Christian church and, at the same time, statues of the mother goddess Cybele and of Sol Invictus, the sun god - the latter being an image of himself, bearing his features. In such eclectic and ecumenical gestures the emphasis on unity can be seen again. Faith, in short, was for Constantine a political matter; and any faith that was conducive to unity was treated with forbearance.

While Constantine was not, therefore, the good Christian that later tradition depicts, he consolidated, in the name of unity and uniformity, the status of Christian orthodoxy. In A.D. 325, for example, he convened the Council of Nicea. At this council the dating of Easter was established. Rules were framed that defined the authority of bishops, thereby paving the way for a concentration of power in ecclesiastical hands. Most important of all, the Council of Nicea decided, by vote, that Jesus was a god, not a mortal prophet.[5] Again, however, it must be emphasized that Constantine's paramount consideration was not piety but unity and expediency. As a god Jesus could be associated conveniently with Sol Invictus. As a mortal prophet he would have been more difficult to accommodate. In short, Christian orthodoxy lent itself to a politically desirable fusion with the official state religion; and insofar as it did so

Constantine conferred his support upon Christian orthodoxy.

Thus, a year after the Council of Nicea he sanctioned the confiscation and destruction of all works that challenged orthodox teachings - works by pagan authors that referred to Jesus, as well as works by "heretical" Christians. He also arranged for a fixed income to be allocated to the Church and installed the bishop of Rome in the Lateran Palace.[6] Then, in A.D. 331, he commissioned and financed new copies of the Bible. This constituted one of the single most decisive factors in the entire history of Christianity and provided Christian orthodoxy with an unparalleled opportunity.

In A.D. 303, a quarter of a century earlier, the pagan emperor Diocletian had undertaken to destroy all Christian writings that could be found. As a result Christian documents - especially in Rome - all but vanished. When Constantine commissioned new versions of these documents, it enabled the custodians of orthodoxy to revise, edit, and rewrite their material as they saw fit, in accordance with their tenets. It was at this point that most of the crucial alterations in the New Testament were probably made. The importance of Constantine's commission must not be underestimated. Of the five thousand extant early manuscript versions of the New Testament, not one predates the fourth century.[7] The New Testament as it exists today is essentially a product of fourth-century editors and writers.

Chapter 5

The Council of Jerusalem[1]

Jesus himself, of course, had had no intention of creating a new religion. Neither had James and the Nazarene Party in Jerusalem. Like Jesus, they would have been horrified by the very idea, regarding it as the most appalling blasphemy. Like Jesus, they were, after all, devout Jews, working and preaching wholly within the context of established Judaic tradition. True, they were seeking certain renewed observances, certain reforms and certain political changes. They were also seeking to purge their religion of recently acquired alien elements and to restore it to what they deemed its original purity. But they would not have dreamed of creating a new system of belief which might become a rival of Judaism - and, worse still, its persecutor.

In A.D. 35, or early in 36, there occurred an uprising in Samaria, led by a Samaritan Messiah. This uprising was ruthlessly suppressed and many Samaritans, including the leaders, were exterminated in the process. At the same time, persecution of Jesus' immediate following seems to have intensified. In A.D. 36, for example, Stephen, usually hailed as Christianity's first martyr (although Stephen would have seen himself, of course as a pious Jew), was stoned to death in Jerusalem, and many Nazarenes fled the city. But that time - possibly as little as a year and a half after Jesus' ascent - they must already have been widespread and numerous, because Paul, acting on behalf of the established Sadducee priesthood and armed with warrants from the High Priest, undertakes to hunt them out as far away as Damascus.[2]

The Sadducees of the Maccabean times were, without question, a group of righteous followers of the Law. However, the Sadducees installed by Herod were very different. They were firmly aligned with the usurping monarch. They enjoyed an easy and comfortable life of prestige and privilege. They exercised a lucrative monopoly over the Temple and

everything associated with the Temple. And they had no concept whatever of "zeal for the Law". Israel thus found itself under the yoke of a corrupt illegitimate monarchy and a corrupt illegitimate priesthood, both of which were ultimately instruments of pagan Rome.[3]

By A.D. 38, Jesus was being openly proclaimed as the Messiah - not the Son of God but simply the rightful and anointed king - by Nazarene refugees, or perhaps established communities, as far away as Antioch. It was here, in the Syrian capital far to the north of Damascus, that the term "Christian" was to be applied to them for the first time. Until then, they had simply been called Nazarenes. And they continued to be called Nazarenes elsewhere - especially in Jerusalem - for many years.

In A.D. 38, a centralized Nazarene authority was already well established in Jerusalem. By later Christian chroniclers, this administrative hierarchy was to become known as "the Early Church". Its most famous member was, of course, Peter. Its official head, however, conspicuously neglected by later tradition, was Jesus' brother Jacob, known subsequently as Saint James, or James the Just. What is significant, however, is that it is not Peter, but Jesus' brother James who presides over the "Church" in Jerusalem.

Although Acts never explicitly states that James is the "leader" of the Jerusalem community, in Acts 15:13-21 and 21:18 he has a prominent role. The latter tellingly states that "Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present." This puts the elders in a subordinate position to James. Paul in his letter to the Galatians (2:9), states: "James, Cephas (Cephas = Peter), and John, who were reputed to be pillars." Later, this same letter (2:11-12) clearly shows that Peter is subordinate to James when he states that Peter came to Antioch sent by James. John is barely mentioned in Acts after the introduction of Paul. Later Church writers specifically call James the leader of the early "Christians".[4]

The Acts of the Apostles

Paul's career is chronicled in Acts. Paul appears on the scene within a year or so of the Crucifixion. Under the name of Saul of Tarsus, a fanatical Sadducee or Sadducee instrument, he actively participates in attacks on the Nazarene Party in Jerusalem. Indeed, he participates so actively that he is apparently involved in the stoning to death of Stephen. Paul is quite explicit. He freely admits that he has persecuted his victims

"to the death".

Shortly after Stephen's death, Paul (still Saul of Tarsus at this point), prompted by a fanatical fervor, embarks for Damascus, in Syria, to ferret out Nazarenes there. He is accompanied by a band of men, presumably armed, and bears arrest warrants from the High Priest. As noted earlier, the High Priest's authority did not extend to Syria. For Paul to exercise a mandate there, he must have had the endorsement of the Roman administration, which indicates that Rome had a vested interest in eradicating Nazarenes. In no other circumstances would it have tolerated militant vigilantes operating with immunity so far beyond their own domains.

On the road to Damascus, Paul undergoes something traumatic, which commentators have interpreted as anything from sunstroke, to an epileptic seizure, to a mystical experience. A "light from heaven" allegedly knocks him from his horse and "a voice", issuing from no perceptible source, demands of him: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul asks the voice to identify itself. The voice replies: "I am Jesus the Nazarene, and you are persecuting me." It further instructs him to continue to Damascus, where he will be told what he must subsequently do. When this experience passes and Saul regains a semblance of his former consciousness, he finds he has been stricken temporally blind. In Damascus, his sight is restored by a Nazarene.[5]

Saul interprets this as a true manifestation of Jesus, whom he never knew personally; and from this his conversion ensues. He abandons his former name in favor of "Paul". And he will subsequently be as fervent in promulgating the teachings of the "early Church" as he had hitherto been in extirpating them. He joins their community, becomes one of their apprentices or disciples. According to his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 1:17-18), he remains under their tutelage for three years, spending much of that time in Damascus.

After his three-year apprenticeship, Paul returns to Jerusalem to join the leaders of the "community" there. Not surprisingly, most of them are suspicious of him, not being wholly convinced by his conversion. In Acts 9:27, Barnabas, the traveling companion of Paul, defends Paul saying that he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. Arguments ensue, however, and, according to Acts 9:29, certain members of the Jerusalem

community threaten him. As a means of defusing a potentially ugly situation, his allies pack him off to Tarsus, the town (now in Turkey) where he was born. He is, in effect, being sent home, to spread the message there.

Thus arises the first of Paul's three (according to Acts) sorties abroad. Among other places, it takes him to Antioch, and, as we learn from Acts 11:26, "the disciples were first called `Christians' in Antioch." Commentators date Paul's journey to Antioch at approximately A.D. 43. By that time, a community of the "early Church" was already established there, which reported back to the sect's leadership in Jerusalem under James.

Some five or more years later, Paul is teaching in Antioch when a dispute arises over the content of his missionary work. As Acts 15 explains, certain representatives of the leadership in Jerusalem arrive in Antioch, perhaps as one scholar, Robert Eisenman, suggests, with the specific purpose of checking on Paul's activities.[6] He and his companion, Barnabas, are summarily ordered back to Jerusalem where the Council of Jerusalem is to convene to discuss the revolutionary ideas of Paul. In accordance with instructions issued to him, Paul returns from Antioch to Jerusalem - around A.D. 48-9, it is generally believed - and meets with the community's leadership. Not surprisingly, another dispute ensues. From this point on, a schism will open and widen between Paul and James; and the author of Acts, so far as the dispute is concerned, becomes Paul's apologist.

If Acts is to be believed, James, for the sake of peace, agrees to compromise, thereby making it easier for "pagans" to join the congregation. Somewhat improbably, he consents to relax certain aspects of the Law, while remaining adamant on others. Paul pays lip service to the leadership. He still, at this point, needs their endorsement - not to legitimize his teachings, but to legitimize, and ensure the survival of the communities he founded abroad. He is already, however, bent on going his own way.

Prior to the Council of Jerusalem the disciples supported Paul's efforts. But afterwards, division occurs between Paul and the other disciples. Paul embarks on another mission of travel and preaching, punctuated (Acts 21:18) by another visit to Jerusalem. Most of his letters date from this period, between A.D. 50 and 58. It is clear from his letters that he has, by

that time, become almost completely estranged from the leadership in Jerusalem and from their adherence to the Law.[7] In his missive to the Galatians (c. A.D. 57), he alludes scathingly to "those who were of high reputation - what they were makes no difference to me" (Gal. 2:6). In Galatians 2:11-13, Paul condemns Peter, and he accuses James and his former traveling companion, Barnabas, of hypocrisy.

His theological position has also deviated irreparably from those who adhere rigorously to the Law. He states in his Epistle to the Romans 3:28: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law." This statement contradicts James 2:19 which says, "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone." Paul's statements are the provocative and challenging remarks of a self-proclaimed renegade. "Christianity", as it will subsequently evolve from Paul, has by now severed virtually all connection with its roots, and can no longer be said to have anything to do with Jesus, only with Paul's image of Jesus.

It must be emphasized that Paul is, in effect, the first "Christian" heretic, and that his teachings - which become the foundation of later Christianity - are a flagrant deviation from the "original" or "pure" form extolled by the leadership. Whether James, "the Lord's brother", was literally Jesus' blood kin or not (and everything suggests he was), it is clear that he knew Jesus personally. So did most of the other members of the community, or "early Church", in Jerusalem - including, of course, Peter. When they spoke, they did so with first-hand authority. Paul had never had such personal acquaintance with the figure he'd begun to regard as his "Saviour". He had only his "mystical" experience in the desert and the sound of a disembodied voice. For him to arrogate authority to himself on this basis is, to say the least, presumptuous. It also leads him to distort Jesus' teachings beyond all recognition - to formulate, in fact, his own highly individual and idiosyncratic theology, and then to legitimize it by spuriously ascribing it to Jesus. For Jesus, adhering rigorously to Judaic Law, it would have been the most extreme blasphemy to advocate worship of any mortal figure, including himself. He makes this clear in the Gospels, urging his disciples, followers and listeners to acknowledge only God. In Mark 10:17-18 for example, a man comes running up to him asking him, "Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."

Paul, in effect, shunts God aside and establishes, for the first time,

worship of Jesus - Jesus as a kind of equivalent of Adonis, of Tammuz, of Attis, or of any one of the other dying and reviving gods who populated the Middle East at the time. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that James and his entourage should be disturbed by what Paul is doing.

Paul knows full well what he is doing. He understands, with a surprisingly modern sophistication, the techniques of religious propaganda;[8] he understands what is necessary to turn a man into a god, and he goes about it more astutely than the Romans did with their emperors. As he himself pointedly acknowledges, he does not pretend to be purveying the historical Jesus, the individual whom James and Peter and Simeon knew personally. On the contrary, he acknowledges, in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, that the community in Jerusalem are promulgating "another Jesus". Their representatives, he says, call themselves "apostles of Christ" and "servants of righteousness". They are now, to all intents and purposes, Paul's adversaries.

By A.D. 58, Paul is again back in Jerusalem - despite pleas from his supporters who, obviously fearing trouble with the hierarchy, have begged him not to go. Again, he meets with James and the leadership of the Jerusalem community. They express the worry they share with other "zealots of the Law" - that Paul, in his preaching to Jews living abroad, is encouraging them to forsake the Law of Moses.[9] It is, of course, a justified accusation, as Paul has made clear in his letters. Acts does not record his response to it. The impression conveyed is that he lies, perjures himself and denies the charges against him. When asked to purify himself for seven days - thereby demonstrating the unjustness of the allegations and his continued adherence to the Law - he readily consents to do so.

A few days later, however, he again runs foul of those "zealous for the Law", who are rather less temperate than James. On being seen at the Temple, he is attacked by a crowd of the pious. "This", they claim in their anger, "is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people, and the Law" (Acts 21:28ff.). A riot ensues, and Paul is dragged out of the Temple, his life in danger. In the nick of time, he is rescued by a Roman officer who, having been told of the disturbance, appears with an entourage of soldiers. Paul is arrested and put in chains - on the initial assumption, apparently, that he is a leader of the Sicarii, the Zealot terrorist cadre.

At this point, the narrative becomes increasingly confused, and one

can only suspect that parts of it have been altered or expurgated. According to the existing text, Paul, before the Romans can trundle him off, protests that he is a Jew of Tarsus and asks permission to address the crowd who had just been trying to lynch him. Strangely enough, the Romans allow him to do so. Paul then expatiates on his Pharisaic training under Gamaliel (a famous teacher of the time), on his initial hostility towards the "early Church", on his role in the death of Stephen, on his subsequent conversion. All of this - or perhaps only a part of it, though one cannot be certain which part - provokes the crowd to new ire: "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" they cry, "for he should not be allowed to live!" (Acts 22:22).

Ignoring these appeals, the Romans carry Paul off to "the fortress"- presumably the Antonia fortress, the Roman military and administrative headquarters. Here, they intend to interrogate him under torture. Interrogate him for what? To determine why he provokes such hostility, according to Acts. Yet Paul has already made his position clear in public - unless there are elements of his speech that, in a fashion not made clear by the text, the Romans deemed dangerous or subversive. In any case, torture, by Roman law, could not be exercised on any individual possessing full and official Roman citizenship - which Paul, having been born of a wealthy family in Tarsus, conveniently does. Invoking this immunity, he escapes torture, but remains incarcerated.

In the meantime, a group of angry Jews, forty or more in number, meet in secret. They vow not to eat or drink until they have brought about Paul's death. The would-be assassins, according to Acts, are thwarted by the sudden and opportune appearance of Paul's hitherto unmentioned nephew, who somehow learns of their plot. This relative, of whom we know nothing more, informs both Paul and the Romans. That night, Paul is removed, for his own safety, from Jerusalem. He is removed with an escort of 470 troops - 200 infantry under the command of two centurions, 200 spearmen and 70 cavalry! (Acts 23:23). He is taken to Caesarea, the Roman capital of Judaea, where he appears before the governor and Rome's puppet king, Agrippa. As a Roman citizen, however, Paul has a right to have his case heard in Rome, and he invokes this right. As a result, he is sent to Rome, ostensibly for trial. There is no indication of what he will be tried for. Paul is believed to have died there some time between A.D. 64 and 67.

The "early Church", then, as it appears in Acts, is rent by incipient

schism, the instigator of which is Paul. Paul's chief adversary is the enigmatic figure of James, "the Lord's brother". It is clear that James is the acknowledged leader of the community in Jerusalem that becomes known to later tradition as the "early Church".[10] For the most part, James comes across as a "hardliner", though he does - if Acts is to be believed - display a willingness to compromise on certain points. All the evidence suggests, however, that even this modest flexibility reflects some licence on the part of the author of Acts. James could not, obviously, have been excised from the narrative - his role, presumably, would have been too well-known. In consequence, he could only be played down somewhat, and portrayed as a conciliatory figure - a figure occupying a position somewhat between Paul and the extreme "hardliners".

In any case, the "sub-text" of Acts reduces itself to a clash between two powerful personalities, James and Paul. Eisenman has demonstrated that James emerges as the custodian of the original body of teachings, the exponent of doctrinal purity and rigorous adherence to the Law. Neither Jesus nor the Nazarene hierarchy had any intention of creating a "new religion". They were promulgating a specifically Judaic message for Judaic adherents. As Jesus himself says:

> "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven ..." (Matthew 5:17-19)

For James and the community in Jerusalem, what matters is Jesus' teaching and his claim to Messiahship in the established context of the time - as rightful king. He is not intended, in his own person, to become an object of worship. He is certainly not intended to be regarded as divine.

In Paul's hands, however, Jesus is made into a full-fledged god, whose biography comes to match those of the rival deities with whom he is competing for devotees - one sells gods, after all, on the same marketing principles used to sell cola or presidents. By James' standards - indeed, by the standards of any devout Jew - this, of course, is blasphemy and apostasy. Given the passions roused by such issues, the rift between James and Paul would hardly have been confined, as Acts suggests it was, to the

level of civilized debate. It would have generated the kind of murderous hostility that surfaces at the end of the narrative.

In the conflict between James and Paul, the emergence and evolution of what we call Christianity stood at a crossroads. Had the mainstream of its development conformed to James' teachings, there would have been no Christianity at all, only a particular species of Judaism which might or might not have emerged as dominant. As things transpired, however, the mainstream of the new movement gradually coalesced, during the next three centuries, around Paul and his teachings. Thus, to the undoubted posthumous horror of James and his associates, an entirely new religion was indeed born - a religion which came to have less and less to do with its supposed founder.

Chapter 6

"He is a Prophet"

It is a much too simplistic view to say that Jesus was a liar, a lunatic, or Lord, as some Christian authors have stated. Jesus, no doubt, was an eloquent speaker who illustrated the spiritual dimensions of this life through parables and manifested his knowledge and authority through miracles. When he spoke of the spiritual world, he often left his audience amazed, astonished, humiliated, or confused. Even now, 2000 years after his death, there still exists confusion about the things he spoke of. The sayings and actions attributed to him in the New Testament have been open to an array of interpretation. Some Christian authors have claimed Jesus to be the "Son of God" based on select passages from the New Testament while completely ignoring others. Although it is generally believed by the academic community that there was much editing to the New Testament documents, it is still possible to sift through the pages of the New Testament and extract other interpretations.

Many Christians would never consider Jesus a prophet. To them, this would be in derogation to the status that has been given to him. However, there are several passages which refer to him as a prophet. Even Jesus considered himself a prophet as did many of his followers. For example, after hearing the news that Herod wanted to kill him, Jesus said, "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it can not be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33). Another time he began teaching in his own city. As he began teaching, some of his people took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household." (Mark 6:1-4)

The author of Acts also makes reference to Jesus as a prophet in citing scripture of the Old Testament. He explains how God announced Jesus, the Anointed One, through the mouth of His holy prophets of ancient time: "Moses said, "The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren." (Acts 3:22).

The people of Jerusalem acknowledged Jesus as a prophet. When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey "The city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the multitudes were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee" (Matthew 21:10,11). One time after addressing the chief priests and the Pharisees in parables "They understood that he was speaking about them. And when they sought to seize him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet" (Matthew 21:45,46). Once on entering a city Jesus is moved by compassion upon seeing a dead man, the only son of a widow, being carried out. Jesus tells the man to arise and he does. The crowd that had gathered was amazed "... and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" (Luke 7:16). In another episode, after Jesus had opened the eyes of a blind man on a Sabbath, division occurred between the people. "They said therefore to the blind man again, "What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." (John 9:17) In another passage, after the event of finding the tomb of Jesus empty, Jesus appears to two men who were traveling to a village just outside Jerusalem:

> And he began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of these things which have happened here in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people." (Luke 24:15-19)

It is clear that many of the people regarded Jesus as a prophet. It is especially telling in the latter passage which occurred at the end of Jesus' ministry. This was after he had performed miracles, after defying the

Roman Empire, after challenging the leaders of the synagogue, after leaving the crowds with words of wisdom and a hope for a kingdom "not of this world", and after everyone thought he had died that a summary of his life was made; all of the people considered him a prophet.

The "Sons" of God

A greater status has been attributed to Jesus than he ever would have given himself. This is due to the perpetuation of a misunderstanding of Old Testament scripture. A closer look at both the Old and New Testament will reveal what Jesus meant when he said he was the "son of God".

The Jews came to Jesus one time asking him to tell them directly if he is the anointed one. He explains that the works he preformed in his Father's name bear witness that he is the anointed one. He concludes by saying:

> "I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning me?" The Jews answered him, "For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God." Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, "I am the Son of God?" (John 10:30-36)

The Jews misinterpreted his first statement when he said, "I and the Father are one." They assumed that he was equating himself with God, which he was not. He was figuratively saying that he is one with God in purpose. This is illustrated in another passage when Jesus prays to God on behalf of his followers. He asks God that they would be one in purpose *the same way* that he and God are one in purpose. He says, "... that they

may be one, *just as* we are one; I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be perfected in unity...." (John 17:22,23). What did Jesus mean when he prayed for his followers to be *one*? He certainly didn't mean that they would be equal in a metaphysical sense but rather that they would be united in conveying the message he had given them, just as Jesus conveyed the message he had received from God.

The explanation Jesus gives in the former passage also clarifies that he is not saying he is the literal son of God. He has taken the metaphorical title given to prophets and princes in the Old Testament. The scripture he was referring to comes from Psalm 82:6,7 where it says, "I said, `You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High. Nevertheless you will die like men, and fall like any one of the princes.'" In a metaphorical sense, Jesus considered himself one of the "sons of God." Bible translators have misinterpreted this statement, capitalized it, taken it out of context, and made it into a title as the "Son of God", which Jesus himself would have considered blasphemous.

This is not the only place in the Bible where people are figuratively described as the "sons of God". In Genesis 6:2 it says "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful..." In Exodus 4:22 Israel is called, "My son, My first born." In Deuteronomy 14:1 it says, "You are the sons of the Lord your God." In 1 Chronicles 22:10, God says of Solomon, "... he shall be My son, and I will be his father..." In Job 1:6 it states that "There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord ..." In Jeremiah 31:9 it says, "Ephraim is My first-born." Even in Matthew 5:9 it says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." And in Luke 3:38 Adam is called the "son of God." It is easily seen that the title "son of God" was not used in a literal sense and not used just for Jesus. It was typically used to describe those who are close to God.

There are many historical facts, records of misunderstandings, and doubts regarding the authenticity of the New Testament and the books chosen to represent the ministry of Jesus. Alternative explanations of Jesus' ministry can be given contrary to traditional descriptions. If Jesus was only a prophet and if he was not God, then what exactly was his purpose? And then, who is God? These are questions that Islam offers an

explanation for. With a better understanding of Islam, it puts Christianity, and Judaism as well, into a clearer perspective. The central point in understanding Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is illustrated in the following passage from the New Testament. The scribes asked Jesus:

> "What commandment is foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." ... And the scribe said to him, 'Right, teacher, You have truly stated that He is One; and there is no one else beside Him..." (Mark 12:28-32)

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all share a similar background. All three religions claim that there is only one God, that he is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. All three religions believe God is the One who communicated through Noah, Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Jaccob, David, and other prophets and messengers. In addition, many doctrines of all three religions are the same. For example, all believe the heavens and the earth were created by God, that there exist angels as well as Satan and his followers, that there will be a Day of Judgement, that there is a heaven for those rewarded and a hell for those punished, and that only God alone can grant forgiveness of sins.

However, some beliefs are unique only to Christianity and Islam. The New Testament and the Quran, the holy book of Islam, both state that Jesus was a prophet and that he was born of a virgin. Both maintain that Jesus was given the Gospel and that he performed many signs and miracles. Furthermore, Christians and Muslims belive that Jesus will be a sign for the coming of the Hour of Judgement. But the main difference between Christianity and Islam, and it is indeed a major point of contention, is that Christians believe Jesus was God and Muslims believe he was only a prophet of God. For a Muslim, it is utter blasphemy and degrading to the majesty of God to say that Jesus was the Son of God and that Jesus was God.

Muslims believe Jesus came, as a prophet of God, to remind his people to believe and obey God. It says in the Quran:

> And in their footsteps we sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: A guidance and an admonition to those who fear God. (Quran 5:46)

This verse from the Quran closely corresponds to the words of Jesus in the New Testament:

> Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17)

Although there are many aspects of the New Testament believed by Muslims, Muslims do not believe the New Testament to be the inspired word of God. Muslims believe the Gospel was communicated to Jesus in a pure form from God, but it was misinterpreted, and/or adulterated by the time it was finally compiled into a single volume.

Muslims acknowledge historical accounts of the crucifixion, but don't believe that Jesus was actually crucified. The Quranic teaching is that Jesus was neither crucified nor killed by the Jews, but there were certain apparent circumstances which produced that illusion in the minds of some of his enemies. The Quran says, "That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah," but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them ..." (Quran 4:157) Some scholars suggest that Jesus only appeared to have died on the cross, while other scholars believe that the one who was crucified was made to look like Jesus. In John 20, we are told that Jesus himself appeared unrecognizable after the event of the crucifixion. This occurs when Mary Magdalene went to the sepulchre. When she found it open without the body of Jesus, she began to cry. Suddenly she turned and saw Jesus standing, but she didn't know it was Jesus. She assumed it was the gardener. She spoke to him briefly, and it is only when Jesus said her name that she recognized him.

Muslims believe that God appointed Mohammad as a prophet to bring the message of Islam for all people. The essential Islamic teachings are contained in the Holy Quran. Islam is a confirmation and continuation of the message given to Jesus and the other prophets and messengers.

Chapter 7

The Meaning of Islam[1]

The religion of Islam is not a new religion. It is, in essence, the same message and guidance which God revealed to all prophets. It says in the Quran:

> Say, "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ismael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes and in the Books given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, from their Lord. We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will." (Quran 3:84)

The Arabic word Islam means submission to the will of God and obedience to His law. The religion of Islam is the complete acceptance of the teaching and guidance of God as revealed to His Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him). A Muslim is one who believes in God and strives for total reorganization of his life according to God's revealed guidance and the sayings of the Prophet. He also works for building human society on the same basis.

The word "Allah" is the proper name of God in Arabic. It is the word, in fact, which is used for God when the Bible is translated into Arabic.

Mohammad was born in the year A.D. 570 in the city of Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia. He came from a noble family; he received the first revelation at the age of forty. As soon as he started preaching Islam, he and his followers were persecuted and had to face severe hardships. He was, therefore, commanded by God to migrate to Madinah, another city in

Arabia. During a short span of 23 years, he completed his mission of prophethood and died at the age of 63. He led a perfect life and set an example for all human beings as his life was the embodiment of the Quranic teachings.

Muslims believe that the Quran is the last revealed word of God and the basic source of Islamic teachings and laws. The Quran deals with the bases of creeds, morality, history of humanity, worship, knowledge, wisdom, God-man relationship, and human relationship in all aspects.

Mohammad himself was an unlettered man who could not read or write. Yet, the Holy Quran was committed to memory and transcribed by his followers, under his supervision, during his lifetime. The original and complete text of the Quran is available to everyone in Arabic, the language in which it was revealed.

The message which was revealed to Prophet Mohammad is Islam in its comprehensive, complete and final form. There are five pillars of Islam:

1. To make a declaration of faith by saying, "There is no god, but Allah, and Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah."
2. To pray five times a day.
3. To pay Zakat or alms.
4. To fast from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan, the lunar month of the Islamic calendar.
5. To make the Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Mecca for those who have the means to perform it.

Islam enjoins faith in the Oneness and Sovereignty of Allah, which makes man aware of the meaningfulness of the Universe and of his place in it. This belief frees him from all fears and superstitions by making him conscious of the presence of the Almighty God and of man's obligations towards Him. This faith must be expressed and tested in action. Faith alone is not enough.

Every person is born innocent according to Islam. Sin is not handed down from generation to generation. Every person is held accountable for the wrongs he commits. Sin in Islam is to do injustice to God, His

creation, one's society, or to oneself. Islam gives us a very clear idea of what sin is, and it shows the process for healing through confession, repentance, and atonement. One must acknowledge the sin to himself and directly to Allah. In repentance one hopes for Allah's grace and mercy and to rid himself of guilt. Muslims are continuously reminded of Allah's kindness, grace, and mercy throughout the Quran. It is through repenting and then striving to live a righteous life that one will feel at peace with God, himself, and his society.

Islam does not teach or accept mere ritualism. It emphasizes intention and action. To worship God is to know Him and love Him, to act upon His law in every aspect of life, to enjoin goodness and forbid wrong-doing and oppression, to practice charity and justice and to serve Him by serving mankind. The Quran presents this concept in the following manner:

> It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but it is righteousness to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity, to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in suffering and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing. (Quran 2:177)

Islam provides definite guidelines for all peoples to follow in all walks of life. The guidance it gives is comprehensive and includes the social, economic, political, moral and spiritual aspects of life. The Quran reminds man of the purpose of his life on earth, of his duties and obligation towards himself, his kith and kin, his community, his fellow human beings and his Creator. Man is given fundamental guidelines about a purposeful life and then he is left with the challenge of human existence before him so that he might put these high ideals into practice. In Islam, man's life is a wholesome, integrated unit and not a collection of fragmented, competitive parts. The sacred and secular are not separate parts of man; they are united in the nature of being human.

Notes and References

Introduction

1 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, The Messianic Legacy, pp.16-18. (adapted in part)

Chapter One

1 Bruce, The New Testament Documents, p.22.
2 Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, p.xv.
3 Baigent and Leigh, The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, p.36.
4 See The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception regarding the history of the pontifical Biblical Commission in its fight against Modernism, chapter six.
5 Baigent and Leigh, The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, pp.119,120.
6 New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.xi, p.551.
7 Benjamin Wambacq, "The historical Truth of the Gospels", The Tablet, May 30, 1964, p.619.
8 Baigent and Leigh, The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, p.120.
9 Yusseff, The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Gospel of Barnabas, and The New Testament. p.101.
10 All biblical quotations are taken from The New American Standard Bible.
11 Bruce, The New Testament Documents, p.31.
12 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, Holy Blood, Holy Grail, pp.327-329.
13 Schonfield, Those Incredible Christians, pp.135-137.
14 Eusebius. The History of the Church, p.202.
15 Ibid., p.88,89.
16 Ibid., p.240.
17 Ibid., p.91.

Chapter Two

1 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, Holy Blood, Holy Grail, pp.322-327. (adapted in part)
2 Maccoby, Revolution in Judaea, p.99.

Chapter Three

1 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, The Messianic Legacy, pp.26-32. (adapted in part)
2 See Micah 5:1-2.
3 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, The Messianic Legacy, pp.30-31.
4 It is on the basis of Mark 6:3 that the story of Jesus as a carpenter developed. However, Dr. Geza Vermes of Oxford University, in Jesus the Jew, points out the common metaphorical use of the terms "carpenter" and "carpenter's son" in ancient Jewish literature (pp.21-2).

Chapter Four

1 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, Holy Blood, Holy Grail, pp.360-369. (adapted in part)
2 Chadwick, The Early Church, p.125.
3 Goodenough, Jewish Symbols, Vol. 7, p.128ff.
4 See Halsberghe, The Cult of Sol Invictus, The author explains that this cult was brought to Rome in the third century A.D. by the emperor Elagabalus. When Aurelian introduced his religious reform it was in fact a reestablishment of the cult of Sol Invictus as originally introduced.
5 The vote was 218 for, 2 against. The Son was then pronounced identical with the Father.
6 It was not until 384 that the bishop of Rome called himself Pope for the first time.
7 There is a possibility that some may be discovered. In 1976 a large repository of old manuscripts was discovered in a monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai. The find was kept quiet for some two years before news was leaked to a German newspaper in 1978. There are thousands of fragments, some dating from before A.D. 300, including eight missing pages from the Codex Sinaiticus now housed in the British Museum. The monks who hold the bulk of the material have granted access only to one of two Greek scholars. See International Herald Tribune (April 27, 1978).

Chapter Five

1 Baigent and Leigh, The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, p.180-187. (adapted in part)
2 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, The Messianic Legacy, p.70-72.
3 Baigent and Leigh, The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, p.203.

4 Ibid., p.251.

5 Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, The Messianic Legacy, p.74-75. It is a possibility that Paul went not to Damascus but to the monastery of Qumran, for the community there referred to their site as "the land of Damascus" (Eisenman, Maccabees ..., p.27; also p.69, note 122). In a lecture, "Paul as Herodian", given to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1982, Professor Eisenman develops the theme of Paul being an agent of the "Herodian" Sadducee party and opposed to all that James and the Zadokites stood for. His sojourn, then, in the Nazarene community, perhaps the one at Qumran, would be akin to that of a spy or agent provacateur.

6 Eisenman, James the Just in the Habakkuk Pesher, pp.30-32.

7 Ibid.

8 Eisenman points to the psychological attitude demonstrated in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where he, among other precepts, explains the necessity of "winning":

> For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews ... To those who are without law, as without law ... that I might win those who are without law ... Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.
> (1 Corinthians 9:19-27)

9 Ibid., see also p.57, n.39 (where Eisenman reviews Paul's "defamation of the Jerusalem leadership" in his letters).

10 Eisenman, James the Just in the Habakkuk Pesher, p.3.

Chapter Seven

1 World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Islam at a Glance. (adapted in part)

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WORLD ASSEMBLY OF MUSLIM YOUTH (WAMY)
Eastern Province

Founded: 1392 H (1972 CE)

Headquarters: Riyadh - Saudi Arabia

Nature: First International Islamic Organization dealing specially with youth affairs embracing over 450 Islamic youth/students organizations in the five continents.

Aims:

1. **Serving the true Islamic ideology based on Tawheed.**
2. **Consolidating the factors of ideological unity and strengthening the Islamic fraternal relationship among the Muslim Youth.**
3. **Introducing Islam to the world using all available means.**
4. **Crystallizing and supporting the constructive role of youth and students in developing an Islamic society.**
5. **Assisting Islamic youth organizations all over the globe through effecting a co-ordination in their activities and helping them to implement their projects.**

International Conference: WAMY holds its international conference every three years. Six such conferences have already taken place — five of them in Riyadh in the years 1972, 1973, 1976, 1979 and 1986 and one in Nairobi, Kenya in 1982. They were attended by representatives of Islamic youth/student organizations from all over the world. The participants selected members of WAMY General Secretariat and discussed issues concerning the Muslim youth.

WAMY also holds/assists in holding local and regional youth camps in different parts of the world all the year round to train the Muslim youth in leadership and organization.

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